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THE BALTIMORE SUN
4 December 1980

Poland facing serious crisis, leaders warn

Carter warning Party appeal

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Washington—With Soviet military preparations increasing, President Carter led a chorus of warnings yesterday that an invasion of Poland would have "most negative consequences."

Estimates of Soviet intentions varied. Some officials thought bloody suppression of Poland's independent labor movement was imminent; others that current Soviet military measures amounted to an ominous warning for the future.

Mr. Carter's warning, the sharpest yet from Washington, was issued late yesterday after the president was briefed by Adm. Stanisfield Turner, the director of central intelligence, on the state of Soviet readiness. The statement had, moreover, the implicit endorsement of President-elect Reagan.

The administration used great care in formulating its reaction yesterday. In several briefings, high officials framed the U.S. position in a way calculated to emphasize the enormity of the consequences of a Soviet invasion without raising threats.

Whether a concerted Western response could be arranged appeared uncertain. One adviser to President Carter said the series of warnings from both the United States and Europe resulted from consultations, but without a clear definition of all measures to be taken if the invasion occurs.

The outgoing and incoming administrations came close to a declaration of common policy, although they have been careful to honor the truism that only Mr. Carter can govern until January 20.

Richard V. Allen, Mr. Reagan's chief foreign policy adviser, said yesterday that he had talked with Secretary of State Edmund S. Muskie and that the administration's attitude reflected that of the president-elect.

Mr. Carter and other administration spokesmen were carefully imprecise about the international consequences of Soviet intervention. There was no suggestion that the United States or the West generally would react militarily, though Mr. Muskie remarked that "we ought to leave the Russians in doubt" on that score.

But publicly and privately, officials emphasized that all efforts at detente would be frozen indefinitely and that scores of trade and other agreements between Moscow and the capitalist democracies would collapse. Mr. Muskie judged that an invasion would "pretty well destroy" the five-year-old agreement on security and cooperation in Europe.

That agreement, signed at Helsinki, Finland, in 1975 by 35 nations, committed those nations to orderly relations and to observance of basic human rights. The West has accused the Soviet Union of constant human rights violations almost from the day the document was signed.

Now, Mr. Muskie said yesterday, the Soviet Union must decide whether it is willing to tolerate some degree of liberalization in Poland or endure world opprobrium for suppressing it. The Helsinki agreement, he suggested, still is serving to restrain Soviet actions toward Poland.

Judgments differed about the state of Soviet readiness. Some U.S. analysts said Soviet troops were ready to intervene within a day or so, others that more time would be required.

Mr. Carter's statement was both a warning to the Soviet Union and a disclaimer that the United States is trying to undermine Moscow's acknowledged security interests in Eastern Europe.

The United States, he said, "is watching with growing concern the unprecedented buildup of Soviet forces along the Polish border and the closing of certain frontier regions along the border."

"The United States has also taken note of Soviet references to alleged anti-socialist forces within Poland. We know from postwar history that such allegations have sometimes preceded military intervention."

He thus referred to Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, both carried out to prevent weakening of Communist systems loyal to Moscow. In neither case did Soviet troops encounter organized military resistance.

In Poland, U.S. officials are convinced, much of the army as well as the public would resist Soviet troops. "If it happens, it will be a bloody mess," a State Department official said.

The United States, Mr. Carter said, "continues to believe that the Polish people and authorities should be free to work out their internal difficulties without outside interference."

The United States as well as some Western governments, and also the Soviet Union, have pledged economic assistance to Poland in order to alleviate internal Polish difficulties. The United States has no interest in exploiting in any fashion the Polish difficulties for its political ends.

"Foreign military intervention in Poland would have most negative consequences for East-West relations in general and U.S.-Soviet relations in particular. I want all countries to know that the attitude and future policies of the United States toward the Soviet Union would be directly and very adversely affected by any Soviet use of force in Poland."

Tension has been rising in Poland, with occasional periods of calm, since August, when three weeks of strikes forced the Polish government to authorize creation of Solidarity, an independent labor federation. In the American analysis, Solidarity's activity clearly implies a long-term political challenge to control by the Communist Party.